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Applications Surge for Class of 1991

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Career Development Office Reports Latest Trends

More and more UB Law graduates continue to choose careers in public interest law: 10 percent, or 27 of 272 employed graduates in the class of 1987 entered public interest practice last year, reports Audrey Koscielniak, director of the Career Development Office. (The category includes public defender, legal services offices and other publicly and privately funded organizations.) This is an increase of 3 percent over the class of 1986, which has 208 employed graduates, and 2 percent over the class 1985, which has 244 employed graduates. According to the National Association for Law Placement, 3 percent of all American law school graduates select public interest practice.

Another trend is the increase in the number of graduates who choose private practice. UB Law grads are earning higher salaries in private practice than ever before — and they're staying in Buffalo.

While a growing number of our law students show an interest in public practice, the percentage of Buffalo students who enter private firms — 60 percent, or 162 graduates in 1987 — compares favorably to the national average, which is 64 percent, according to Koscielniak. That 60 percent is an increase of 6 percent over the previous year and 3 percent over the class of 1985.

Approximately 40 percent (109) of the class of 1987 remained in the Buffalo metropolitan area. In the class of 1986, 32 percent (68) remained in the area, and in the class of 1985, 36 percent (87) stayed.

Koscielniak also reported a new record high for a starting salary — \$82,500 in New York City. The average starting salary for the class of 1987 was \$29,547, up from \$28,294.

While salaries have gone up, "I don't think it's the starting salaries that keep graduates in Buffalo," Koscielniak says. "A lot of the firms that are hiring our recent graduates are not the high paying firms that you read about in the headlines. Most pay

only around \$22,000 to start.

"But many of our graduates like the quality of life in Western New York and want to stay in Buffalo, so they're joining the small — and very small — general practice firms that are so prevalent here."

In the business and industry category, which includes corporations, financial institutions, insurance companies and public accounting firms, there was a decline in interest for the class of 1987. Only 5 percent (13) selected that employment option, down from 11 percent in the class of 1986 and 7 percent in the class of 1985. Nationally, about 9 percent of all law graduates are classified in business and industry.

"But the situation appears to be changing for the class of 1989. In Fall '88, public accounting firms were pleased by the number and quality of Buffalo applicants on their interview schedules," Koscielniak reports. "We have an excellent tax program, and employers find Buffalo graduates attractive candidates. It also helps that Buffalo graduates in accounting firms have done a fine job of encouraging their firms to recruit our students."

There was also a slight decline in government employment. The class of 1987 had 11 percent (31 graduates) go into government service, which includes federal, state and local levels. This was down 2 percent from previous years.

However, the percentage of students pursuing advanced degrees — both non-law and law — increased after a decline in 1986. Four percent of the class of 1987 (12 students) are studying for MBA's and Ph.D's, and 2 percent (5 students) went on for LL.M's. ■

Applications Surge 16 Percent for Class of 1991

UB Law School enjoyed a 16 percent increase in the number of applicants this year, up from 1,435 in 1987 to 1,723 in 1988. Aundra C. Newell, assistant dean for law school admissions, says this rate reflects the

nationwide surge of 16 percent reported by the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC).

Of the applications received, 540 students were extended offers to study at UB. An unprecedented 304 students paid tuition deposits and 262 ultimately enrolled.

Last year, 663 applicants were extended offers and 258 enrolled. Most entering classes in recent history have fallen between 250 and 270 students.

"Getting into a good school is tougher today, and more people recognize that UB is a quality school," says Newell, commenting on the dramatic increase in the number of applicants.

"When students compare UB to other law schools, they quickly discover that we have a notable history. We are the only law school in this area. We enjoy a national reputation. Last but not least, the tuition is comparatively low."

The larger applicant pool makes UB increasingly more competitive as well as more diverse, she points out. "We are in a position to pick and choose."

Newell reports that the class of 1991 is comprised of 140 males and 118 females. Fifty-six are non-white. Of the minority students, 29 are male, 27 female.

The median Law School Aptitude Test scores of all students is 31. The highest possible score on the test is 48. Their median Grade Point Average is 3.23.

While 238 of the new students hail from New York, UB Law has attracted students this year from 11 other states as well. Foreign students also arrived from Brunei, Canada, France, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, United Kingdom, and Zaire.

The large number of applications was "unexpected and surprising," Newell says.

According to Law Services Report, the newsletter of the LSAC, during the past four years "legal education had prepared itself for a continued decline in applications, or at best for a period of stability."

So why the rise? Some observers think the stock market crash in October prompted many prospective M.B.A.s to switch course, and it was too late in the game for them to try for medical school.



Dr. Chester J. Gary, left, and Steven Rubinstein, members of the class of 1991.

TV programs like *LA Law* and recent movies including *Legal Eagles* and *From the Hip* may have also spurred interest in the legal profession.

By contrast, the number of medical school applicants has been declining, and business school applications have increased only slightly. No comprehensive statistics exist.

In describing the applicants, Newell cites a steadily increasing interest in public interest law, a field for which UB Law School is well known. In a random sampling of essays of applicants, many wrote that they would like to improve the environment, or effect change in the system by working at the community level, or work for legislation that benefits women, the underprivileged and minorities.

Among the members of the class of 1991 are those who have been out of school a good number of years. Once called nontraditional students, they are becoming a significant part of the student body. Some are homemakers who put off graduate school, others are making career changes. For the past three years, there have been

50-year-olds in the entering class. "Age is an asset in law school, not a negative," says Newell. "And students who begin with other areas of expertise do innovative things with their law degree."

Several students with science backgrounds, for example, are interested in getting into patent law and technical areas, such as the newly emerging field of space law. A few applicants are medical doctors interested in the growing field of law and health care. One is a well-established dentist.

Learning disabled and physically handicapped students comprise yet another group. "We're quite proud of our record here and the fact that we do open our doors to them and provide a supportive environment," Newell says.

"Law schools are looking for a greater diversity in their student populations. Everyone is not a 20-year-old Poli-Sci major right out of undergraduate school any more," she says.

A few of the students who will enter UB Law School this fall:

- Steven Rubinstein is a 38-year-old with a

masters of education in counseling. Rubinstein worked as a psychotherapist and as an administrator for various state and federal programs for disadvantaged and handicapped youth. Previously, he was a vice president for research and development of a marketing and advertising firm.

In his personal statement, Rubinstein wrote: "I have reached a point when new challenges and opportunities for growth are needed in order to further my professional goals. Law studies will afford those opportunities, while at the same time providing the means with which I may be a more effective force for positive change within society."

- Valda Ricks was one of three students admitted under a new SUNY scholarship designed to help underrepresented minorities enter the licensed professions. Ricks, a Black, was born in St. John's Antigua, West Indies. A single mother of three, she was in the Honors Program in both the Political Science and Sociology departments of SUNY-Buffalo.

"It is my desire to provide legal representation to minority persons in areas that are vital to our existence. That is, employment, housing, wife and child support . . . There is a lot I can do for my community," she wrote.

- Dr. Chester J. Gary is a Williamsville dentist and over the past ten years has developed a comprehensive general practice. After graduating from UB Law School, he intends to specialize in health law.

"Failure to anticipate the discrepancies between changing dental practices and legal demands has led to a crisis in the malpractice area," Dr. Gary wrote in his statement. "I would use my D.D.S. and J.D. degrees to research, write, and teach dentists the law as it monitors daily practice. I would strive to expand the dental jurisprudence curriculum to include a more comprehensive review of risk management techniques. My goals also include defending dentists through clarifying dental-legal issues, and if possible, attempting to work for positive trends in legislation at the local and state level."